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AUTHOR Louis, Karen Seashore; Smith, BetsAnn
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ABSTRACT

To discover how school restructuring affects teachers' work and teacher engagement, a study was conducted on eight schools that have been experimenting with alternative structures, programs, and activities for 7 to 10 years, The data presented were collected in two of the schools through observations of 15 classes and interviews with teachers, students, and administrators. Insights from the observations show that alternative structures and programs can positively affect teacher worklife and engagement but have a specific, bounded impact. The data suggest that reform efforts are the most successful when they are focused in intent and based on a clear model of what achievements are most important. (EJS)

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RESTRUCTURING, TEACHER ENGAGEMENT AND SCHOOL CULTURE: Perspectives on School Reform and The Improvement of Teacher's Work[1]

Karen Seashore Louis

BetsAnn Smith

University of Minnesota

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INTRODUCTION

Over the past 15 years many reports and books have documented the deteriorating status of working conditions for American teachers in typical high schools. Since approximately 1982 there has been an additional set of well publicized recommendations about how to improve teaching and teachers, and during this period some schools began to change their structure in order to affect the teacher's role and the conditions for teaching and learning. This paper will address a critical question related to the current wave of school reform: How might school restructuring affect teachers' work and teacher engagement over time?

The reform literature suggests a wide variety of alternative structures, programs and activities that could directly support or improve teachers' working conditions. Suggested innovations range from career ladders and merit pay to more teacher control over curriculum, policy and resources, to improved professional development, to more opportunities for teachers to professionally interact, to broadened roles for teachers in the operation of the school as a whole.

Although several on-going studies are examining the potential of current reform activities to improve teachers' work, most schools and districts have been seriously grappling with reform for only a few years. Since research suggests that the period of early and middle implementation of a major change will be unstable, if not chaotic, it is difficult to extrapolate long term effects from these current efforts.[2] In this paper we chose a different approach: to study two schools that have been experimenting with alternative structures, programs and activities for seven to ten years, and whose efforts are reasonably well stabilized within the school and district.

In the remainder of the paper we will first discuss how restructuring may affect teacher engagement. We then present case study data from two public high schools where teachers told us that they "wouldn't want to work anywhere else" but which have taken very different approaches to restructuring. The story of these two schools does not present "final data," but does

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[2] For example, the much touted differentiated staffing experiment in Fairfax Country, VA. is now apparently on the rocks as school board members voted to change the merit pay structure (Fiske, 1989).

report initial insights regarding the relationship between restructuring, school culture and teachers' engagement.

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND ENGAGEMENT IN SCHOOLS

Our framework draws on several sets of literature which have been largely separate: material on educational reform that has appeared in the 1980s, and social science literature on job redesign and organizational behavior. After briefly discussing these separate traditions, we will present a model linking restructuring to teachers' engagement with their work and students.

Teachers' Work and School Effectiveness

Both reform reports and recent research have been sharply critical of the way in which the formal and informal aspects of the school system--curriculum, structure, and cultural assumptions-- obstruct effective teaching (Little, 1984; Darling-Hammond, 1984; Johnson, 1987; Rosenholtz, 1985; Carnegie Forum, 1986; National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Concerns range from daily barriers, such as lack of basic materials to carry out teaching activities, to the long-term impact of flat career structures on incentives to remain in teaching as a life-long career.

There are two underlying premises in this literature: First, it is assumed that working conditions and career opportunities affect the degree to which teachers are actively engaged with teaching and strive to create exciting learning environments in their classrooms. In other words, teacher working conditions and student working/learning conditions are believed to be inextricably related. This assumption allows the issue of staff working conditions to be viewed as a subset of the broader objective of creating "effective schools" that increase student engagement, learning opportunities and achievement.

Second, it is assumed that the structure of the school and the profession can be altered, without a radical change in the existing system, to improve the attractiveness of the profession and the probability that teachers will remain engaged over a long-term career. However, there is little agreement about a single "best way" to restructure to achieve these ends. In fact, our basic

assumption is that there are many ways to restructure to improve teacher working conditions and to achieve more effective schools.

Professionalism and Reform of Teachers' Work

Elsewhere (Louis and Smith, 1990) we have argued that there are two different perspectives on improving teachers' work by increasing its professionalism. The first emphasizes the teacher's specialized expertise, and envisions reforms that are based on making teaching more similar in its role structure to the classical professions of law and medicine. The second is the empathy-centered image of professionalism that is articulated by many able and dedicated teachers, which focuses on the need for teachers to be involved with students at a personal level. In this image, professional values that promote more personally powerful working relationships between teachers and students are central, and the focus is not on expertise related to knowledge and pedagogy, but on human relations skills and serving students' individual needs. In this paper we will argue that these two images are not inconsistent, but demand a school culture that emphasizes a variety of different roles for teachers.

The school reform literature is largely consistent with the conceptual frameworks that have been used to study work life in a variety of other organizational and professional contexts (see, for example, Lawler, Nadler and Mirvis, 1980; Biderman and Drury, 1976). The social science research on work life, however, uses more complex models that relate organizational contexts to quality of work life and other factors such as individual and group attributes, attitudes, beliefs and expectations (Pasmore and Sherwood, 1984), the role of external environments (Lawler, Nadler and Mirvis, 1980), and "deep history"-- the commonly shared explanations about how the organization operates and why (Louis and Miles, 1990). Most notably, this literature offers a more detailed definition of quality of work life than does the educational literature, and leads to greater specificity concerning what kinds of restructuring should promote improved working conditions for teachers, and teacher engagement.

A review of the quality of work life indicators in the organizational literature cited above identified seven criteria, which we have reviewed in more detail elsewhere (Louis and Smith, 1990) that are consistent with issues expressed in the educational reform literature:[3]

- o respect from relevant adults, such as the administrators in the school and district, parents, and the community at large (Firestone and Rosenblum, 1989; Kahn, 1974);
- o participation in decision making that augments the teachers' sense of influence or control over their work setting (Firestone and Rosenblum, 1988; Sickler, 1988; Cohn, et al., 1987);
- o frequent and stimulating professional interaction among peers (e.g., collaborative work/collegial relationships) within the school (Little, 1984; Miles, et al., 1986; Newmann, et al., 1988);
- o structures and procedures that contribute to a high sense of efficacy (e.g., mechanisms permitting teachers to obtain frequent and accurate feedback about their performance and the specific effects of their performance on student learning) (Rosenholtz, 1985; 1989);
- o opportunity to make full use of existing skills and knowledge, and to acquire new skills and knowledge (self-development); the opportunity to experiment (Sederberg and Clark, 1990; Newmann et al., 1988);
- o adequate resources to carry out the job; a pleasant, orderly physical working environment (Cohn, et al., 1987; Public School Forum of North Carolina, 1987);
- o a sense of congruence between personal goals and the school's goals (low alienation) (Cohn et al., 1987; Metz et al., 1988; Louis and Miles, 1990).

LINKING QUALITY OF WORK LIFE AND TEACHER ENGAGEMENT

The general quality of work life literature tends to regard the outcome of improved job conditions as an increase in general work satisfaction and motivation. The educational literature, however, suggests that we should be also be concerned with teacher's engagement with work in and out of the classroom because teacher engagement may stimulate student engagement and thus serve to create more effective schools. Studies of elementary schools indicate that when students perceive that teachers care about them and their performance, they will work harder (Brookover,

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[3] The preliminary research on career ladders does not indicate that these will have a strong effect on the typical teacher's job satisfaction, although they may have other desirable effects (Hart, 1987; Sederberg and Clark, 1987). We have therefore not included promotion structures as a key aspect. In addition, many QWL frameworks emphasize extra-work activities as an aspect of QWL. We prefer to view this as an exogenous variable that may be related to QWL but is not part of it.

et al., 1979). Older adolescents may be less responsive to adult approval than elementary school students, but there is reason to assume that the effect of "caring" will not disappear (Wehlege, et al., 1989). In addition, engaged teachers are likely to work harder to make classroom activities meaningful--introducing new ways of learning, altering the presentation of materials so that they are more relevant, and of greater intrinsic interest to students (Newmann, 1989). They are likely to work with students in extra-curricular activities, which helps to bind students to the school. This may, in turn, affect achievement. Dworkin (1987) shows that the students of teachers who show lower solidarity and work satisfaction exhibit lower achievement gains and have higher rates of absenteeism. Similar results linking teacher engagement and student engagement are reported in secondary analyses of the High School and Beyond data (Bryk, Lee and Smith, 1989).

We hypothesize that where schools develop alternative structures, programs and activities that operate, either directly or indirectly, on teachers' quality of worklife, there will be a correspondingly higher level of teacher engagement.[4] Four distinctive types of engagement can be identified in recent empirical research (Newmann, Rutter and Smith, 1987; Bryk, Lee and Smith, 1989; Firestone and Rosenblum, 1988; Wehlege, et al., 1989)

- o engagement with the school as a social unit. This form of engagement creates a sense of community and personal caring among adults within the schools and facilitates integration between personal life and work life. For example, the quality of work life factors reflecting participation, influence and collaborative work will involve increased interaction between teachers and administrators, which, in turn, should increase cohesiveness.

- o engagement with the academic goals of the school. Teachers may be socially integrated, yet fail to create an atmosphere of high expectations. (Powell, et al., 1985; Metz, personal communication). Quality of work life factors that may increase commitment to academic goals include allowing teachers to participate in important school decisions, and developing meaningful feedback about teacher effects, which may help teachers to focus on academic purpose.

- o engagement with students as unique whole individuals rather than as "empty vessels to be filled." This form of engagement may motivate teachers to deal with students undergoing personal crises, or to be more sensitive and aware of adolescent development. It is believed to be particularly important for retention of at-risk students. As an example of how quality of work life may affect this form of engagement, increasing teacher's sense of efficacy through feedback on performance may increase their commitment to individual students, because they can experience

[4] Rutter's (1986) analysis of the High School and Beyond data supports this causal assumption.

their own potential for affecting the individual. Gaining respect from relevant adults and the community may also affect this, since people who are respected and feel cared for tend to respect and care for others.

- engagement with their discipline, or the body knowledge needed to carry out effective teaching. In secondary schools, particularly within rapidly changing fields, teachers must be energized to access and incorporate new ideas in the classroom and curriculum. Quality of work life factors that may affect this include a combination of respect (for having specialized skills and knowledge) and being provided with opportunities to use and develop skills and knowledge.

METHODS

Data on the two high schools that will be analyzed in this paper were gathered as part of a larger research project on teacher quality of work life.[5] The objective of the larger research project was to examine the nature of teachers' work in public, non-selective high schools that were actively involved in efforts to improve working conditions.

Sample

Eight schools were selected to participate in the study after extensive telephone contact with researchers, regional laboratory staff, and contacts in with people who were involved with the "reform movement" in a variety of states. In these contacts we solicited nominations of schools that had several programs, structures and activities that had (1) been implemented at the school for three or more years; (2) made the school structurally "different" from a typical comprehensive high school; and (3) were intentionally focused on improving working environments for teachers. Follow-up telephone calls and one-day visits to schools that appeared to meet the criteria were used to further screen eligibility and interest in participating. We deliberately chose a diverse sample of community environments. One school was in a predominantly affluent community; three schools--two suburban, one rural, and one urban--were in mixed socio-economic communities of middle class status overall, and three served communities where over half of the student body came from disadvantaged homes, including students from poor, minority and immigrant families.[6]

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[5] The theoretical framework for the larger project has been described in Louis and Smith, 1990. The final report from the project will be completed in late 1991.

[6] The vast majority of schools nominated for the study were located in predominantly white professional or upper-middle class suburban school systems. We deliberately restricted the selection of such schools to 1 out of 8 so that we more clearly examine the degree to which alternative structures, programs or activities might generate high quality of work life in settings where

In addition, we selected schools that exhibited different patterns of programs structures and activities.

Among this group of eight schools, Alameda and Northwood, the schools to be discussed in this paper, are the clearest examples of a well-institutionalized restructuring effort in a "typical" comprehensive high school based on a well-articulated and persistent philosophy of school organization and change, and therefore provide the best examples to illustrate the points that we make about reform strategies and teacher engagement.[7] However, the results presented in this paper are consistent with analysis of the eight other schools.

Data Collection

In each school, two members of the research staff, which consisted of four senior staff and one research assistant, spent 10-11 person-days of time collecting data using semi-structured observation and interview protocols. The focus of both interviews and observations was on understanding the impact of district, and school organization on teachers' work lives.

Fifteen classes were observed, four each from the lower or general, college preparatory, and honors tracks. The classes were chosen to reflect a variety of student grade levels. Twelve were distributed among the major academic subjects, while three were chosen from elective departments such as business and vocational education. Observations focused on both teacher and student engagement in the instructional and learning process. Each observed teacher was interviewed for an average of 45 minutes about their perceived quality of work life and engagement with work. Although the structure of the interviews was loose, questions were largely organized around the quality of work life variables outlined above, with probes for various personal, interpersonal, leadership and contextual factors (such as student or community characteristics, and district or state policies) that might account for the individual's response.

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previous research suggests that it would be low.

[7] They do not, however, have the highest levels of teacher engagement, which were found in new, alternative schools (see Louis and Smith, forthcoming). We hypothesize that the excitement of being involved in creating a new school or being involved in the beginning stages of a major reform may have a strong temporary effect on teacher engagement.

Several group interviews with teachers who were not observed were also held, as were group interviews with students from different tracks. Students were asked about their relationship with teachers, as well as the general climate of the school for learning. Key administrators were also interviewed regarding the instructional program, the efforts to change teachers' work and broader efforts at school improvement. The principal was "shadowed" for 1/2 to 3/4 of a school day in order to obtain more details about his or her routine leadership style, and to supplement what was learned from the teacher, student and administrator interviews. We also attended whatever meetings and events occurred during our time in the school, ranging from lunch to evening activities.

Data Analysis

Following the site visit work, field notes and taped interviews were used to develop a 50-60 page case report, jointly authored by the two site visitors, which summarized the observations and interviews according to a common outline. This case report constitute the "primary data base" for analysis. Taped interviews with teachers were also transcribed to provide additional information and to serve as a source of additional illustrative quotations. Data analysis has been conducted using the intra- and cross-case techniques outlined in Miles and Huberman (1984).

ALTERNATIVE STRUCTURES IN THE TWO SCHOOLS

The high schools discussed here--Alameda and Northwood--were selected for the study in part because they have many things in common. Both serve student populations that are 65-75% minority. Both have safe and reasonably pleasant work environments and both receive sufficient resources and materials. They have cordial working relationships with district authorities, enjoying autonomy over their curricula and teaching. They have had strong principals who, over the past seven to ten years, have helped to initiate a number of significant programs and activities that are designed to make the schools more effective. Each received an award from the Secondary School Recognition Program during the program's second year.

Furthermore, the schools have both had low teacher turnover, so that the majority of the professional staff has been in the building for fifteen or more years. Both staffs have strived to

build caring and trusting relationships between students and teachers. For example, in spite of the fact that it is tremendously noisy and chaotic both schools chose to have a single, whole-school lunch period for their more than 1,000 students in order to promote and facilitate togetherness, student clubs, and one-to-one tutoring. Additionally, each school has developed special events that bring students and teachers together for the purpose of promoting communication skills and a positive school culture. Finally, like so many American high schools, these two schools shared a growing concern about their ability to successfully meet the challenges involved in serving students with a growing range of abilities and a profound range of needs.

Northwood and Alameda differ, however, in their philosophies of how schools become effective and about how teacher quality of work life and teacher engagement fit into improvement strategies. Accordingly, they have undertaken distinctively different restructuring efforts.

Northwood Senior High School

Northwood is a bedroom community of a major industrial city in the midwest. It serves a largely middle and lower middle class population which, ten years ago, was predominantly Jewish but is now 70% black. The school underwent this rapid transition remarkably well, averting disruptive problems such as race related hostilities or high teacher turnover, and it maintained its academic, college preparatory orientation. But the transition was not easy. Many of Northwood's new students were coming from inner city schools with disruptive climates and lower academic standards.

The school sought a way to welcome these students without loosing its positive and orderly climate or its traditions of above average student achievement. It broke ranks with typical school practice by infusing into the school day programs and policies that directly confronted student and family problems such as fighting, drug or alcohol use, sexual activity, pregnancy, and suicide. It put teacher-supervised students in charge of monitoring and responding to these concerns by training them to counsel their fellow students and empowered them with the authority to pull students out of class when problems arose (Positive Peer Influence program). It also involved students in disciplinary proceedings against their peers (Student Court). The degree to which

discipline and maintenance of the social order is delegated to students is symbolized by the school's three security guards and vice-principal for discipline, all of whom are relatively small women.

Some teachers began spending free periods sponsoring support groups for students coping with divorce, or alcoholism while many more worked to extend personal caring to students who were struggling in a "One-on-One" program. Most of the teachers have received extensive training in recognizing and intervening in student drug use. These programs are still in use today and Northwood was a recipient of one of the first Drug Free School awards.

Recently, the school has continued its student focused reform by developing a team developed block program for at-risk students. Six teachers collectively plan and teach the curriculum which stresses life skills and academic basics.

All of these programs reflect the principal's philosophy that schools become effective only by increasing affective education:

> If you have a positive school climate, you will have improved academics. The key is the Caring Quotient. If the caring quotient goes up, you will see achievement, maybe even I.Q. go up. Because our students care for each other, and for the teachers, they do things (academically) that they wouldn't otherwise do.

This willingness to confront the realities of student's lives in and out of school and to emphasize student responsibility and leadership with regard to discipline and social problems has affected the teachers as much as the students. Since teacher frustration increases with the behavioral or social problems their students bring to school, providing a system to reduce those problems has protected classrooms from disruptions that destroy opportunities for real teaching, and has helped many students become more able and willing to concentrate on the tasks of learning. One teacher described this for us:

> Let's say that I am having class and one of my students is having serious problems. Not learning problems, something else, something that is really messing up their emotions or their behavior. I know that I can send this kid down to one of the student counselors. And they will go, because it's a student and they like the program. And I can feel that I both cared for that kid and that I took care of my class by making sure it didn't get derailed.

While the scope of these student-focused programs is unusual, they were not the only alternative structures worth noting at Northwood. Northwood's principal initiated a Faculty Senate within weeks of his arrival twelve years ago. The Senate includes every staff member and meets

every other week for approximately one hour. The faculty elects officers, runs the meetings, and is responsible for making all decisions about school policy. A number of Northwood teachers who wanted to be highly involved in the development of the student programs were given administrative support to expand their roles and opportunities by advising the student counselors, running support groups or acting as advisors to the student governance system in place of teaching a class.

Also, Northwood provided its teachers with ample opportunities for individualized professional growth. We noticed that staff development was based on a preference for cosmopolitan behaviors: the school made every effort to get information about staff development activities all over the country, but the initiative for designing a development program rested with the individual teacher. Teachers could receive release time and a subsidy to attend conferences in any part of the state and even out of state.

Alameda High School

Our second school, Alameda, is located in the urban sprawl just outside of Los Angeles. Its student body is extremely diverse. The school serves a barrio and is roughly 35% Hispanic; 18% of its students are Asian (including Filipinos) and 6% are African-Americans. Many are recent immigrants. Alameda families are of moderate to low income; it is the only Chapter I school in the district and half of its ninth graders receive compensatory education services. Unlike Northwood, which had historically enjoyed a good reputation, Alameda was considered "the problem school," and had a record of gang activity, high dropout rates and poor achievement.

Seven years ago the district transferred a strong, dynamic principal into Alameda with a mandate to turn the school around and improve its retention and achievement standings. The philosophy she brought to Alameda was that it should significantly raise the expectations placed on both students and teachers; she believed Alameda should become

"...a school for students and a university for teachers."

In her view schools could not be excellent without continuously exposing teachers to new ideas, practices and opportunities to reflect on themselves and their programs. The school thus embarked on a major renewal program which gave program and curriculum responsibilities to teachers, and

provided massive, off-campus school directed inservice. In other words, Alameda's restructuring focused on new roles for teachers that involved working not with students, but with other teachers. The pace at which teachers were challenged to come together and develop new programs was, at times, exhausting.

Even before the new principal arrived, a full-time coordinator had been appointed from the teacher ranks to work on school improvement activities. Other teachers were representatives on a school improvement council, which determined how state monies for new programs would be allocated within the school. Teachers were encouraged to make proposals to the council, which was also staffed by parents and students. The committee reviewed proposals and awarded funds based on a competitive review. In this way the school reinforced the importance of teacher initiated curriculum and instructional innovations. In Alameda, it was considered "o.k. to fail, but important to try" with respect to innovation.

A mentor teacher program was initiated, and this group designed staff development activities as well as providing in class observations and feedback to other teachers. Furthermore, Alameda teachers and department chairpersons were trained to do frequent non-evaluative peer observation and feedback. "Pressure to teach" grew and was positively accepted among most staff.

Alameda's extensive inservice program was, in contrast to Northwood, very local and focused on whole-school or multi-department events which sometimes included retreats for the entire staff. In the past, these activities were designed and run either by the principal or the mentor teachers, and were efforts to address collective issues among the faculty. Topics ranged from personal development (for example, how to deal with stress) to training in instructional techniques such as cooperative learning. A more recent change has decentralized control over inservice funds to the department, a change that was endorsed by the mentor teachers, who believed teachers should take more control over inservice. Relatively few teachers were actively involved in inservice activities that were not based in the school, and most of the latter worked with other teachers in the district.

Alameda does not have a faculty senate but instead sends representatives to participate in administrative committees responsible for policy formation. And, while the staff has always

described itself as a "caring staff", less emphasis has been given to conditions that might affect the whole student population in significant affective ways. It is assumed that if teachers are learning and excited and are raising their expectations the teaching and learning environment for students will improve as a result. Alameda has had two new principals over the past three years but innovations continue, largely because they are in the hands of teachers who are now experienced school improvement leaders.

THE IMPACT OF STRUCTURES AND PROGRAMS ON TEACHERS ENGAGEMENT

What may seem most apparent in our description of these reform programs is the supportive leadership role played by the principal. Indeed, while the two principals who shaped and initiated these reform efforts are philosophically very different they share some similar attitudes and behaviors. Both believe that teachers are professionals who should be supported to do their work in the manner they see best. Both did everything they could to get their staff needed resources when they were trying something new, telling them "Don't worry about the money/time/district. I'll take care of that for you." Both worked to develop the leadership potential of their staff, providing them with new kinds of training and opportunity. They kept their doors open. They valued group process and gained the majority of teachers' support even though both were making new demands on their staff. The well formulated concepts and ideas these principals articulated provided teachers with performance standards and an environmental stability that reduced uncertainty and brought positive values and recognition to teachers' work lives. These leadership factors contributed substantially to the success of the restructuring efforts these schools were attempting in order to improve their students' and teachers' experiences.

Yet, there is considerable evidence that the programs, structures and activities, once initiated by the principal, had impacts on teachers work that cannot be explained only by "good leadership." If we return to the model presented above we can summarize these briefly.

Engagement With the School as a Social Unit

This form of engagement was relatively high in both schools, but there were considerable differences between the two. Teachers at Alameda frequently talked about the positive

relationship that they had with all teachers in the school, and its importance to them. The emphasis on collective staff development and collegial interaction on issues that crossed department lines seemed to be responsible for a positive "whole school" climate. This climate reflected a sense of obligation not only to support each other, but to learn from each other. Teachers felt that they belonged to a professional and personal community of adults, rather than a shifting and transient community of students. With one exception, identification with departments as an important social unit was also high, in part because each one had its own single story building in which all of the classrooms and the department office were located. The fact that there was only one lunch period was pointed to as a positive feature, since it permitted teachers to get together in any combination for discussions or meetings.

Northwood, on the other hand, structured fewer opportunities for teachers to work together on curriculum and instruction, and "whole school" staff development efforts were not mentioned. Events that engaged a number of staff together focused on improving the student culture rather than that of teachers. The single period lunch at Northwood was not viewed by teachers as significantly promoting interaction because the distances between building areas were an obstacle to regular mixing of staff during lunch. The only regular activities for all teachers were the Senate meetings--where people declaimed more than discussed--and an informal social gathering after school once each month. This gathering is cheerful and well attended but lasts only forty minutes or so. Departments were a source of identification for some teachers, but the smoking issue, and fragmentation in different buildings and on different floors undermined cohesiveness for others.

Academic Engagement

This form of engagement actually seemed to be made up of two separate subcategories: engagement with teaching, and engagement with achievement. This distinction became important as we sought to understand how Alameda's teachers adjusted their strong positive feelings about students and their enthusiasm for working with them to the reality of their relatively low achievement levels. We postulate that by paying only limited attention to the "achievement

problem"--about which they hardly ever talk, even when they discussed intensive efforts to try to raise test scores--Alameda teachers could direct their engagement towards building a positive school climate and creating for themselves the experience of reaching their students personally.

In contrast, Alameda teachers were deeply engaged in the craft of teaching. Largely as a result of staff development and inservice, Alameda's teachers' prided themselves on their ability to use a variety of instructional formats and to avoid frequent use of traditional teacher-directed classes and to use assessment approaches other than tests and quizzes. Most teachers, for example, used several different instructional methods in every class (for example, cooperative learning and whole-class discussion). The exception was Honors, where more traditional teaching was "demanded by the students."

Concerns about teaching and achievement were different at Northwood. Many felt that Northwood students wanted traditional content and teacher-centered instruction and, with the exception of the block program, teaching styles have remained stable. Commitment to high achievement, however, has been strong and teachers emphasize the need to prepare students to meet the requirements of their college-prep content rather than experiment with teaching. One teacher helped us understand the lack of experimentation in instruction:

> Remember, for the last six to eight years or so our student population has been changing rapidly. When we came to school the first day of the year we had little idea about who would walk into our classrooms and what their abilities would be. These really weren't the kinds of conditions that encouraged a lot of experimentation. You were just trying to make sure everything didn't start going haywire.

We duly noted that achievement data for Northwood remained stable during the population transition, and rates of post-graduate enrollments have increased.

Engagement With Students

Involvement with students as individuals was high at both schools but the nature of engagement was quite different. At Alameda, where the philosophy of caring was reflected in a family-like atmosphere, teachers and students were bonded in networks of personal affection. Teachers emphasized the ways in which they were like their students, having grown up in working-class neighborhoods, and feeling more comfortable in a multi-racial context. When

teachers talked to students they often used endearments such as "honey." The mix of students was viewed as a positive feature by teachers, as it provided them with constant challenges. At Alameda, a critical norm seemed to be that teachers should not criticize students, either in class or in teacher groups. During the two weeks that were spent there during different school years, we never heard a teacher make derogatory remarks about students.

In contrast, at Northwood, the culture emphasized the institutional responsibility of the school to solve non-cognitive student problems through a more professional and organized intervention system. Many teachers echoed the principal's position that the stresses encountered by today's adolescents necessitated changes in the role of the school. There was almost uniform support among the staff for the need for schools to accept responsibility for student's affective as well as cognitive needs: most staff were occasionally involved in student support or counselor roles on a limited basis, and most had been through a training program that provided information about student drug use, how to recognize it, and how to intervene. It is revealing that some teachers referred to the high school students as "children."

Unlike Alameda, however, we found that quite a few teachers (particularly the veterans) were disappointed in student culture and behavior. Some spoke about their concern about dominant student values, referring to them as "more materialistic than I was when I was a kid," or "less motivated--more interested in working and parties...I think that maybe all kids are like that today." Others expressed reservations about the level of teacher involvement with problems as serious as drug use, alcoholism, or depression given the fairly short training programs provided.

These discomforts reflect philosophical differences between Northwood teachers about teacher/student engagement. Some were fully committed to the "Caring Quotient." Others did not want to be in counseling relationship with students, and were concerned that academic engagement was disrupted when students were taken from class for counseling.

Engagement with subject matter/discipline

This form of engagement was much higher in Northwood than in Alameda. In the latter, few teachers spontaneously talked about their love of their subject matter--they were more

interested in talking about students, the faculty, and instructional issues. Logically, the school's emphasis on school-wide inservice might detract from a subject area focus.

At Northwood, on the other hand, we observed and talked to quite a few teachers who, without prompting, discussed their love of their subject matter. One teacher, for example, described his subject (earth sciences) as his hobby as well as his work, and mentioned that he stayed late and came early in order to work with his rock collections. Another teacher remarked:

> Oh, its too bad that you didn't come yesterday. I was teaching [subject], and its one of the parts of the course that I love the most. I really get involved in it, almost act it out...

Northwood teachers were also much more likely to focus their staff development efforts on disciplinary concerns rather than instructional ones.

DISCUSSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

> Whatever you steadfastly direct your attention to will come into your life. If you do not direct your attention to anything in particular, and many do not, then nothing in particular will come into your life [except uncertainty and suspense] (Fox, 1938:109).

A simple conclusion from the above cases is that the two schools got what they worked for. Northwood's alternative structures and programs (particularly student responsibility for maintaining school discipline, and the strong intervention programs for students) emphasized raising student engagement but did not succeed in improving <u>all</u> aspects of work life for its teachers. More specifically teachers were not enjoying the kind of collegial interaction that provides meaningful feedback on their classes, allows discussion of uncertainties or creates support for trying new teaching methods, and were not as satisfied with their ability to influence decisions.[8]

The direct attention paid to teacher engagement at Alameda helped to recapture the climate of the school, stabilize school performance and improve the quality of teachers' performance and instruction. This effort was sustained through specific programs, such as school-based inservice,

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[8] It is important not to over-interpret the last conclusion. The Faculty Senate, although somewhat beleaguered, introduced teacher voice into the school, and increased teachers' sense of respect. The function of the Senate was valued, but it was not working as effectively as teachers hoped.

the representative governance structure and the flexible evolution of the mentor teacher program. We believe teacher engagement at Alameda, with its largely low income and English-as-a-Second-Language population, to be as high or higher than what you would expect in middle and upper class communities. However, achievement was not outstanding relative to other schools with similar populations.

We must emphasize that the data presented above do not lead to a conclusion that one school was "a better school" than the other, or that it pursued a wiser program of reform. The reform efforts made at Northwood were an attempt to humanely protect performance standards in the face of a rapid and radical change in its student body. The concerns Northwood had that these changes would threaten the school, that it would loose its staff and "go down" were legitimated during some candid sharing by a math teacher:

> Very honestly, ten years ago when people were saying that a migration from the city was going to repopulate the community and Northwood would become a mostly black high school, my feeling was that I would leave. I just didn't see how it could happen without all kinds of fighting and tension. But, here I am. And, the kids in my classroom now, they are not any different then they were before. They're just the same, and I like them just as much.

There are too many tragic American high school stories to not appreciate the accomplishments Northwood has secured. The school is successfully recruiting experienced teachers who are eager to share in this success. It sends 80% of its students on to post-secondary education, and race relations at Northwood are not just good, they are inspiring. The school's strategy of bolstering student engagement did not focus on objectives espoused in the current reform literature, but it did protect the work lives of teachers from debilitating frustrations, and clearly affected student engagement.

Alameda, on the other hand, faced the difficult task of maintaining a "caring environment" while moving toward real changes in teacher effort and innovation in working with very diverse and educationally disadvantaged students. The strategy of improving teacher morale by focusing on collaborative improvement of instruction was, in our view, an exciting and innovative one. Alameda teachers were not insensitive to the need to produce better school-wide achievement, and particularly to equalize achievement among the different ethnic groups. The current emphasis in

Alameda is on curriculum reform, and teachers are eagerly working with students to improve standardized test scores, particularly in reading and language. Nevertheless, the focus on teaching and staff development had its clearest payoffs in the uniformly high levels of teacher engagement throughout the staff.

Our primary insight from these observations is general but rather promising: alternative structures and programs can positively effect teacher work life and teacher engagement, but they have specific and bounded impact. Educational reformers should not expect one set of reforms to serve all purposes in the school: Current calls for restructuring, or school based management, for example, often sound like a model to repair everything from curricula to budgetary efficiency. However, our data suggest that reform efforts are most successful when they are focused in intent and based on a clear model of what is most important to achieve.

The case studies sketched here also steer us to more specific conclusions that should inform the development of reform policies at both the government and school level. First, in contrast to the enthusiasm projected in many of the U.S. reform reports discussion above, alternative structures and programs cannot, in themselves, produce teacher engagement. They must reflect and mesh with the cultural values of the school students, staff and leadership. The programs in Alameda and Northwood have been successful over time because principals and teachers were really committed to them, and were willing to work hard to achieve and maintain them.
The small and large successes we observed in these schools cannot be attributed to a single element of their complicated reform efforts, but to the way in which all of them mesh with the more intangible qualities of the school. This sends a warning that mandated reform efforts or models of restructuring may fail to produce desired or meaningful outcomes. Mutual adaptation may not be enough when the innovations being implemented are pervasive and reform-like: effective change processes will depend on a more flexible, evolutionary and locally specific response.

Second, efforts to improve work life and engagement should attend to the critical work life factors we have emphasized here: structures, programs and activities will affect teachers' engagement and effort insofar as they augment respect, collegial work, meaningful feedback, etc. An example is Northwood's Senate, which was initiated by the principal with the intention of

providing staff with the opportunity to direct school policies. The idea itself was agreeable, but the form it took was not collegially designed and did not work well for most teachers. We also see the limited engagement with teaching as an evolving craft at Northwood as a direct result of the lack of structures and programs for stimulating discussion and experimentation in this area. Likewise, the extent to which Alameda teachers were exploring all kinds of new teaching ideas and were doing so in a school serving many less adept students demonstrated the powerful influence strong programmatic efforts can have.

Third, teachers may make compensatory trade offs in the forms of engagement to which they are drawn in order to maintain a work life that is rewarding rather than frustrating. In Alameda, where students were less likely to show outstanding achievement, emphasis was placed on engagement with instruction, and engagement with students as vulnerable, developing individuals. In Northwood, the keen interest in maintaining academic traditions and proving that a more middle-class minority school could win academic awards had teachers focusing on engagement with achievement. In Alameda, engagement with the school as a social unit was extremely high, but negligible with their subject matter discipline. The reverse was true in Northwood.

Finally, the faculties of these two schools have both presented the prospect that teacher engagement is not completely dependent on student behavior that is determined by socio-economic and family characteristics. Although the community perceptions of these schools are not always positive, the life and work that is going on inside of them is. In the hallways and classrooms of these schools you see teachers (and students) who are relaxed and smiling and purposeful. They are so because the "wouldn't want to work anywhere else." Even though teachers at these school worked with a demanding range of student abilities, attitudes and ambitions, they were successful in developing programs and relationships which helped to build and maintain positive personal and professional experiences.

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